



The Brown Hen

George stood in the farmyard looking up at the roof. The old farmhouse had a fine roof of pale red tiles and tall chimneys.

There was no sign of Grandma. There was only a song thrush sitting on one of the chimneypots, singing a song. The old wurzel's got stuck in the attic, George thought. Thank goodness for that.

Suddenly a tile came clattering down from the roof and fell into the yard. The song thrush took off fast and flew away.

Then another tile came down.

Then half a dozen more.

And then, very slowly, like some weird monster rising up from the deep, Grandma's head came through the roof ...

Then her scrawny neck ...

And the tops of her shoulders ...

'How'm I doing, boy!' she shouted. 'How's that for a bash up?'

'Don't you think you'd better stop now, Grandma?' George called out ...

'I have stopped!' she answered. 'I feel terrific! Didn't I tell you I had magic powers! Didn't I warn you I had wizardry in the tips of my fingers! But you wouldn't listen to me, would you? You wouldn't listen to your old Grandma!'



'You didn't do it, Grandma,' George shouted back to her. '*I* did it! I made you a new medicine!'

'A *new medicine*? You? What rubbish!' she yelled.

'I did! I did!' George shouted.

'You're lying as usual!' Grandma yelled. 'You're always lying!'

'I'm not lying, Grandma. I swear I'm not.'

The wrinkled old face high up on the roof stared down suspiciously at George. 'Are you telling me you actually made a new medicine all by yourself?' she shouted.

'Yes, Grandma, all by myself.'

'I don't believe you,' she answered. 'But I'm very comfortable up here. Fetch me a cup of tea.'

A brown hen was pecking about in the yard close to where George was standing. The hen gave him an idea. Quickly, he uncorked the medicine bottle and poured some of the brown stuff into the spoon. 'Watch this, Grandma!' he shouted. He crouched down, holding out the spoon to the hen.



‘Chicken,’ he said. ‘Chick-chick-chicken. Come here. Have some of this.’

Chickens are stupid birds, and very greedy. They think everything is food. This one thought the spoon was full of corn. It hopped over. It put its head on one side and looked at the spoon. ‘Come on, chicken,’ George said. ‘Good chicken. Chick-chick-chick.’

The brown hen stretched out its neck towards the spoon and went *peck*. It got a beakful of medicine.

The effect was electric.

‘*Oweee!*’ shrieked the hen and it shot straight up into the air like a rocket. It went as high as the house.



Then down it came again into the yard, *splosh*. And there it sat with its feathers all sticking straight out from its body. There was a look of amazement on its silly face. George stood watching it. Grandma up on the roof was watching it, too.

The hen got to its feet. It was rather shaky. It was making funny gurgling noises in its throat. Its beak was opening and shutting. It seemed like a pretty sick hen.

‘You’ve done it in, you stupid boy!’ Grandma shouted. ‘That hen’s going to die! Your father’ll be

after you now! He'll give you socks and serve you right!

All of a sudden, black smoke started pouring out of the hen's beak.



'It's on fire!' Grandma yelled. 'The hen's on fire!'

George ran to the water trough to get a bucket of water.

'That hen'll be roasted and ready for eating any moment!' Grandma shouted.

George sloshed the bucket of water over the hen. There was a sizzling sound and the smoke went away.



'Old hen's laid its last egg!' Grandma shouted. 'Hens don't do any laying after they've been on fire!'

Now that the fire was out, the hen seemed better. It stood up properly. It flapped its wings. Then it crouched down low to the ground, as though getting ready to jump. It did jump. It jumped high in the air and turned a complete somersault, then landed back on its feet.



hen was growing and the way Grandma grew. When Grandma grew taller and taller, she got thinner and thinner. The hen didn't. It stayed nice and plump all along.

'It's a circus hen!' Grandma shouted from the rooftop. 'It's a flipping acrobat!'

Now the hen began to grow.

George had been waiting for this to happen. 'It's growing!' he yelled. 'It's growing, Grandma! Look, it's growing!'

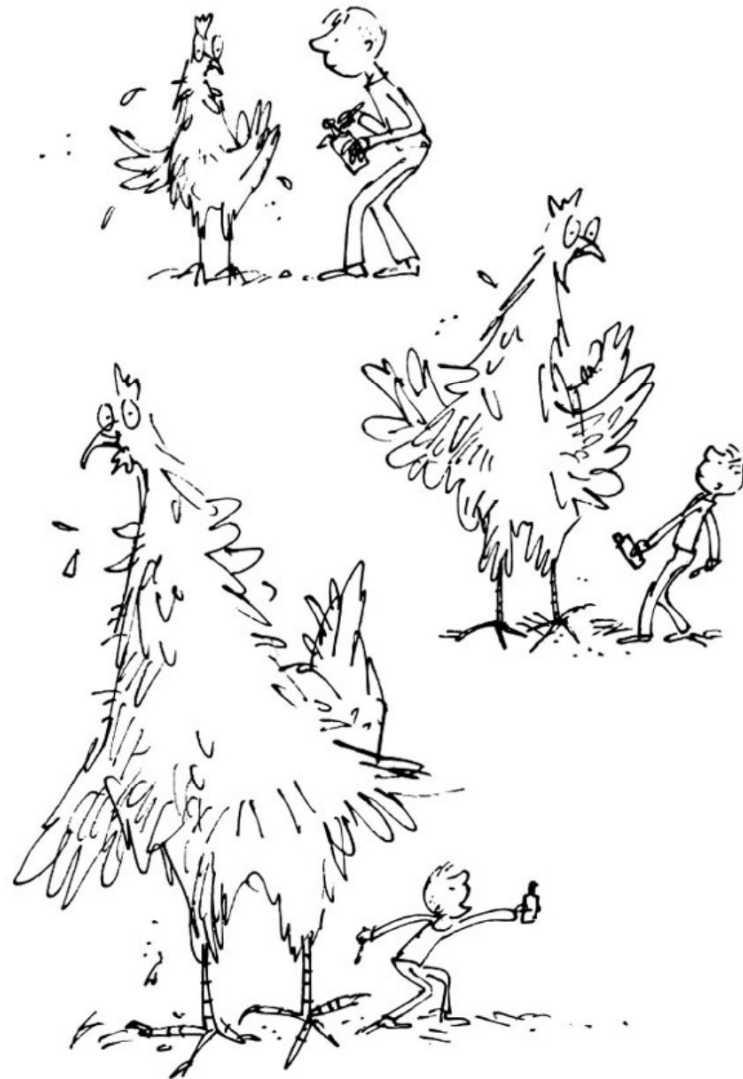
Bigger and bigger ... taller and taller it grew. Soon the hen was four or five times its normal size.

'Can you see it, Grandma?!' George shouted.

'I can see it, boy!' the old girl shouted back. 'I'm watching it!'

George was hopping about from one foot to the other with excitement, pointing at the enormous hen and shouting, 'It's had the magic medicine, Grandma, and it's growing just like you did!'

But there was a difference between the way the



Soon it was taller than George, but it didn't stop there. It went right on growing until it was about as big as a horse. Then it stopped.

'Doesn't it look marvellous, Grandma!' George shouted.

'It's not as tall as me!' Grandma sang out.
'Compared with me, that hen is titchy small! I am the tallest of them all!'



Task – please answer the following questions.

1.



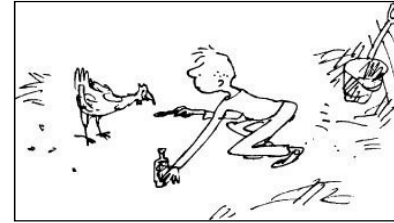
A



B



C



D

Put these pictures in the right order and describe what is happening in each picture.

2. What did Grandma tell George she was good at?
3. Why did George give the medicine to the brown hen?
4. Can you think why the brown hen didn't get thinner as it got taller, like Grandma did?
5. **"Doesn't it look marvellous, Grandma?" George shouted.** Write down 3 things you would do if you had an enormous hen!